

AMENDMENTS TO THE SPECIFICATION

Please amend the paragraph that begins on page 2, line 25 as follows:

A plurality of substrates can be densified simultaneously in a single enclosure, with the substrates being placed in such a manner as to ensure that all of them are exposed to the flow of reactive gas admitted into the enclosure. US patent No. ~~5-904-956~~ 5,904,957 shows identical substrates disposed in a particular manner in annular stacks for this purpose. The gas is admitted and directed towards the inside (or the outside) of the stacks and it flows through the substrates and the gaps between them so as to be taken up from the outside (or the inside) of the stacks.

Please amend the paragraph that begins on page 11, line 24 as follows:

Slots 130_1 , ~~130_2~~ 130_2 , 130_3 are formed through the trays all around annular zones thereof, outside the edges of the substrates S_1 , S'_1 and a third substrate (not shown) for the tray 222_1 , substrates S_2 , S'_2 and a third substrate (not shown) for the tray 222_2 , and substrates S_3 , S'_3 and a third substrate (not shown) for tray 222_3 so as to leave direct passages for fractions of the gas flow admitted into the enclosure, enabling the gas to flow through the planes occupied by the trays in a manner that is equivalent to the gaps 30_1 , 30_2 , 30_3 shown in Figures 1 and 2.

Please amend the paragraph that begins on page 12, line 24 as follows:

A plurality of gas effluent evacuating pipes, such as pipes 214₇ and 214', ~~and 214"~~ are preferably provided and united outside the enclosure, these pipes opening out into the enclosure in register with the tops of the substrates located on the top tray so as to ensure that the gas flow travels fully over the outside faces of these substrates.

Please amend the paragraph that begins on page 13, line 12 as follows:

The studs 324₂ are fixed on a respective support tray 322₁ which stands on the diffusing tray 316 via spacers ~~326₂~~ 326₁.

Please amend the paragraph that begins on page 14, line 6 as follows:

The residual gas flowing through the opening 328₂ of the top tray is evacuated by the pipe 24-14 which opens out in the cover 10b of the enclosure.

Please amend the paragraph that begins on page 16, line 1 as follows:

By way of comparison, the same densification process was performed on similar preforms, but omitting the flow-guiding walls 332₁ and 332₂ and the central openings 328₁ and 328₂ in the trays 322₁ and 322₂, as shown in Figure 11. The substrates S'₁ and S'₂ were supported by the preheater plate 316 and by a solid tray ~~332'₁~~ 332₁ via blocks 324'₁ ~~324'₁~~, 324'₂ analogous to the blocks 324₁, 324₂ of Figure 7. Samples E₁, E₂ made of the same material as the substrates were placed respectively on the end wall of the

substrate S'_2 and beside it on the tray 322_1 . Figures 12 and 13 are images obtained using an optical microscope with $\times 440$ magnification, in polarized light showing the surfaces of the samples E_1 and E_2 after densification. The presence of numerous projections and soot can clearly be seen on the surface of the sample E_1 , in spite of the improvement provided by the presence of the trays compared with the situation in which substrates are placed without taking any precautions whatsoever on the substrates. Although the trays did not have any central openings and did not support any tooling for guiding the gas flow, they nevertheless helped to distribute gas flow via the gaps $330'_1$, $331'_1$ ~~$330'_2$~~ and $331'_2$.